



Private Solar System Considerations

As your energy provider, we have the resources and expertise to build and operate cost-effective universal wind and solar projects – and we have developed programs like MIGreenPower for customers interested in supporting more renewable energy without making exterior alterations to their homes or businesses.

If you want to invest in your own private solar systems, here are some things to consider:

Your home:

Is your roof new enough and strong enough to accommodate solar panels?

Solar panels are a long-term commitment, so you will want to be sure your roof is in very good condition before installation. Removing and reinstalling solar panels can be costly.

If I buy private solar, will my home be “off the grid?”

No, unless you also purchase a system that includes a large battery storage component, which can significantly increase the complexity and cost of the system. Customers with private solar are still connected to the grid and receive a bill for the energy they use when their system has not produced enough to cover their needs. They also receive a credit for excess energy produced that goes back onto the grid.

Will my solar home be affected by power outages?

In general, private solar systems are designed to shut down during a blackout. This is necessary to protect the safety of people making repairs to restore power to the grid.

Is my home sunny enough for solar?

While solar panels will generate some energy on cloudy days, the amount they produce is based on how much sunlight they receive. Large trees that provide shading to your house can reduce the production of solar panels on your roof. If it's cloudy or the panels are covered with snow, they may not produce enough energy to meet your household needs. Also, the location of the panels on the roof has a significant impact on solar energy generation, so in some cases rooftop solar might not be a viable option.

Will solar panel installations affect the warranties for my home or roof?

This is an important question to ask your home and roof warranty provider. You should also make sure the solar panel installer will replace panels damaged by storms or fallen trees.

Will solar panels affect the resale value of my home?

That all depends on if the buyers see a value in them. Check with a local real-estate broker to understand resale values. If you want to sell your home and you've taken out a loan to pay for your solar system, you'll need to pay off the loan balance. If you've leased your solar panels, you will need the buyer to agree to take over your contract or pay off the lease balance yourself.

Your Safety

Are solar panels safe?

Solar panels should be installed in accordance with all local codes and state regulations. Remember solar panels can draw high voltage energy that must be properly managed by your solar system. To prevent electric shock or fires have a certified electrician install or review your installation for safety.

Remember, even if there is a utility power outage, your solar system can still be producing electricity and should be considered “live”.

Your wallet:

What is the best way to pay for a private solar system?

Private solar financing is done in a variety of ways. Generally speaking, homeowners can purchase the system outright, take out a loan to purchase your system or lease your panels by signing a power purchase agreement. Solar loans and solar leases each have advantages and disadvantages, so it is important to do your research to determine what works best for you.

Will installing private solar save me money in the long run?

Private solar systems are costly, and prices vary depending on the size of your home and the complexity of the system installed. Solar technology is evolving very rapidly. Policy and legislation also have an impact on private solar accounting. In short, there are no guarantees you will get back as much as you originally thought you would when you first installed the private solar system.

Won't the tax credit I get cover most of the cost of my new system?

The Federal Investment Tax Credit that allows residential solar customers to deduct 30% of their system installation cost from their taxes starts to decline in 2020 and ends in 2023. You may be eligible for other rebates and incentives, but it is important to do your research and read the fine print to ensure that any deal offered is really as good as it may appear on the surface.

Your installer:

Will DTE be installing my private solar system?

No. DTE does not install private solar systems. Customers will need to hire a company that specializes in this type of work to assist them.

What is the best way to find a reputable private solar system installer?

Do your homework like you would with any major purchase. Be sure the installer is certified, licensed, and insured. Ask for references and make sure your questions are answered thoroughly and transparently. Check the Better Business Bureau for company ratings or complaints filed. Read online reviews and ask a neighbor or friend who has had experience with private solar.

How will I know if I'm getting the best price for my system?

As with any major purchase, getting quotes from a few different installers can help. When reviewing your options, just be sure you are comparing “apples to apples.” Solar system quotes can vary due to equipment used, financing options and other underlying assumptions. Also be sure to ask your installer about warranties to protect your investment. The amount of energy solar panels produce can decrease with age and vary by manufacturer.